



Israel's Work on Empowering Women, and Worldwide Socio-Economic Development Efforts Outlined in Speech at Stockton College

For Immediate Release; with Renford photos attached

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Galloway Township, NJ - Israel's "best kept secret" may be the work of the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Center (MCTC), which helps train and empower women around the world, including Palestinians.

Mazal Renford, immediate past director of the center in Haifa, Israel, today told students at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey about the center's work. The MCTC, started by the late Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir, works with the United Nations, the World Bank, and many government and non-profit agencies in over 140 countries, under the auspices of MASHAV – Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

MASHAV provides a variety of training, including literacy, agricultural practices, and helping people become business entrepreneurs, Renford said. It cooperates with international organizations and specialized agencies of the United Nations, such as UNESCO and UNICEF.

Its primary focus is empowering women and eradicating poverty and hunger through socio-economic development.

"We show people how to start something from nothing," Renford said, teaching business and managerial concepts such as how to write a feasibility study and a business plan, along with marketing and production techniques. The center supports budding entrepreneurs in "business laboratories" where they have access to resources a single start-up would not have.

"Israel is considered a laboratory of development," Renford said, noting that the country was founded in 1948 and started from scratch. But the public service of MCTC and MASHAV is not publicized much, she acknowledged when a student questioned why media coverage of Israel often focuses on violence.

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MASHAV works with countries in Africa, Asia, Latin and South America, Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean region. Some of those countries do not have diplomatic relations with Israel, she said, and “we do not speak of politics.”

In developing training programs for Palestinian women and women in various Arab countries, it is often necessary to get their husbands’ or parents’ approval. But adapting to various cultures’ social customs is necessary for a program to succeed, she said.

She explained that it is necessary to include men in its programs in many different countries, making its message about “gender equality, not just women’s issues.”

Gender equality and equal access to economic resources can lead to more democracy in a society, she said. But you can’t start by talking about such ideals when people “just want to have food.”

“If you don’t invest in people, you can’t get results,” she said.

Renford has represented Israel at many international conferences, including the World Bank, and UNESCO, and participates annually in the official delegation of Israel to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

Her presentation to a class of Dr. Marcia Fiedler, assistant professor of Jewish Studies, was sponsored by the Consulate General of Israel and Stockton’s Department of Jewish Studies.

For more information, visit www.mfa.gov.il/mjf/mashav

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Note that higher resolution versions of photos are available on request.

Caption info:

Mazal Renford, immediate past director of the Golda Meir Mount Carmel International Training Center in Israel, speaks to students at The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey on Oct 24, 2014. She outlined Israel’s little-known programs to empower women and promote socio-economic development in over 140 countries.

Photo credit:

Photo by Meaghan Resta/The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey